

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, SW

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTIES CONTINUE TO LEAD GOVERNMENT IN
OPINION POLLS

REF: STOCKHOLM 2597

1. WITH ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE THAN TWO MONTHS REMAINING
BEFORE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE LATEST
SWEDISH PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW THE THREE BOURGEOIS
OPPOSITION PARTIES HOLDING 53.5 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE
AS OPPOSED TO 44.5 PERCENT FOR THE COMBINED SOCIALIST
CAMP (SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS). FOR THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WHO RECEIVED 40.5 PERCENT IN THE POLLS,
THE FINDINGS REFLECT AN INCREASE OF TWO PERCENTAGE
POINTS FROM THEIR ALL-TIME LOW IN MAY OF ONLY 38.5
PERCENT (REFTEL). HOWEVER, THE COMMUNIST (VPK) PARTY
SLIPPED SLIGHTLY FROM 4.5 PERCENT IN MAY TO 4 PERCENT,
WHICH REPRESENTS THE MINIMUM FIGURE NECESSARY FOR
REPRESENTATION IN THE RIKSDAG.

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2. AMONG THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE CENTER PARTY DECLINED SLIGHTLY TO 21.5 PERCENT, THE MODERATES REMAINED IN APPROXIMATELY THEIR MAY POSITION WITH 19 PERCENT, WHILE THE LIBERALS INCREASED SLIGHTLY TO 13 PERCENT, THEIR HIGHEST STANDING IN THE POLLS SINCE THE ELECTIONS OF 1973.

3. THE POLL RESULTS INDICATE THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO REVERSE THE UNFAVORABLE TREND WHICH BEGAN EARLY THIS YEAR. WITH BARELY TWO MONTHS LEFT BEFORE ELECTIONS, THE PARTY OBVIOUSLY HAS AN UPHILL BATTLE TO PULL ABREAST OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. THE REAL EFFORT, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BEGIN UNTIL EARLY AUGUST; FOR THE MOMENT THE POLITICIANS, LIKE THE VAST MAJORITY OF OTHER SWEDISH, ARE ENJOYING THE SWEDISH SUMMER BY VACATIONING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND ON THE BEACHES.

4. MOST OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED ARE HESITANT TO PREDICT VICTORY, GIVEN THE WELL-KNOWN ABILITY OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TO COME FROM BEHIND IN THE CLOSING MONTHS OF A CAMPAIGN. EVEN WITH THE POLLS SO CLEARLY IN THEIR FAVOR, THESE POLITICIANS REMAIN UNCERTAIN OF THEIR ABILITY TO UNSEAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AFTER 44 YEARS IN POWER. NEVERTHELESS, WITH SO LITTLE TIME REMAINING, IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY PROBLEMATIC WHETHER THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR IMPRESSIVE PARTY AND UNION APPARATUS, WILL BE ABLE TO CLOSE THE GAP BEFORE SEPTEMBER 19-20 ELECTIONS. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE CLEARLY ON THE DEFENSIVE. AS PALME AIDE PIERRE SCHORI INFORMED US LAST WEEK, THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERS ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER THE PARTY'S INABILITY SO FAR THIS SUMMER TO BOUNCE BACK FROM THE LOW POINT OF EARLY SPRING AND PICK UP MOMENTUM FOR THE FINAL SURGE IN SEPTEMBER. UNLESS THIS SURGE STARTS SOON, THE "UNTHINKABLE" (A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FALL FROM POWER) WILL BECOME A REALITY.
SMITH

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